

Bosses agree—it'll be murder tonight

MIDDLESBROUGH will murder Wycombe Wanderers in tonight's FA Cup third-round replay at Ayresome Park—and that confident prediction was made today by . . . wait for it . . . Wycombe manager Brian Lee!

That makes two of them—for Jack Charlton said immediately after the goalless draw at Wycombe on Saturday that Boro would

murder the non-League Wanderers at Ayresome Park.

The Isthmian League team flew in to Teesside last night, but were up bright and early today for a thorough workout on their opponents' training ground at Hutton Road, placed at their disposal by Middlesbrough FC.

Afterwards Mr. Lee, described by his skipper, Alan Phillips, as a completely honest man, a good soccer planner, and one highly respected by all his players, told me:

"Jack Charlton has said his team will murder us on their own park. I agree with him. Football is not a game of fantasy, it is a very realistic contest between two teams—not Roy of the Rovers.

"We will be out to do our best at Ayresome Park tonight, and I hope we do ourselves credit.



Bad slope

"Why won't we win? Because Middlesbrough are too good for us."

Boro's manager was quoted as saying professional footballers should not be asked to play on such sloping pitches as that at High Wycombe and that if a Football League team was drawn away to a non-League side in the Cup, the game should be played on the nearest League ground to the home team.

Brian Lee's response to that was: "When you are in Rome, you do as the Romans do. If you enter the Cup, you enter it in its entirety."

"Our greatest challenge tonight is to let people see we can play on a flat pitch, as well as on our own."

"What people seem to forget is that we play on a flat pitch every other week in the Isthmian League—and we are the champions."

Boro wait

"We have respect for professional football, respect for the First Division and respect for Jack Charlton—and that is not altered by the fact that they had an off day against us last Saturday."

The happy Wanderers of Wycombe trained on the same ground as Boro's reserves and juniors.

The Boro first-team squad were to have a spot of

loosening-up late in the afternoon, followed by a tactics talk.

Striker Alan Foggon, whose leg has been in plaster because of a calf strain received at Wycombe, will have a late fitness test, but it is expected that Boro, as well as their opponents, will be unchanged.

And a grimly determined Boro side will leave nothing to chance. They mean to go all out from the first whistle to establish an impregnable position as soon as possible.

No upset

As they proved on their own pitch, Wycombe are capable of some useful football, but I can't see them upsetting the form book twice in four days. Not on an even surface!

I confidently forecast that Boro would get through at the first attempt. A gallant display by the Isthmian League men and a low-level performance by Boro shot that one down, but I am even more convinced that long before the final whistle at Ayresome Park tonight, Wycombe's interest in the FA Cup will have become academic.

And Mr. Lee will be able to say: "I told you so."